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Official Programme

Sunday 31st March 1974

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Although according to our club fixture list today's game is shown as being played yesterday at Wilmslow, those of you who have turned up will, I am sure, join me in extending a very hearty and sincere welcome to our good friends from Wilmslow. The original misprint in our fixture list could possibly have resulted from the fact that we seem to have played so many matches over the last year or so at Wilmslow that the printer may well have assumed that all matches from now on are to be played there. However, since the original fixture was made both Wilmslow and we have reached the final of the Cheshire Cup, and rather than overburden our players with an extra match, the game has been rearranged to take place today, and to count as well as the County Cup Final. I sincerely hope that the pre-match publicity given to this game will have prevented both the Sale supporters from trecking to Wilmslow.

It is always a pleasure to welcome Wilmslow to Heywood Road, for the encounter on the field is, to say the least, fiercely contested, although perhaps not quite so fiercely contested as a place at the bar is after the match. They certainly bring waves of their vociferous and somewhat partisan supporters, whose vocal encouragement from the touchline is perhaps only exceeded by their capacity for draining our barrels in the evening. The words "fiercely contested" do, I believe, correctly describe all of the encounters which I have witnessed since being a member of Sale, although I would hasten to add that although being fierce, they have never, to my knowledge, been anything but scrupulously fair. This is the essence of rugby union, where even though there is extreme local competitive feeling, the games are almost invariably played in the right spirit.

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another fine record behind them, having played 35, won 26, drawn 5, lost 4, and scored 666 points against 246. This is, as you will see, a somewhat better record than our own, which we believe is in itself very good. Our record reads played 37, won 25, drawn 1, lost 11, and scored 654 points against 428. However, in making comparison, we might feel that Wilmslow's emergence as a top club is rather more recent than Sale's, and as yet they are not called upon to play as consistently as we against the top names in British club rugby. It is certain, though, that with the type of rugby they are producing, and the ever-improvement in their fixtures, they can justifiably claim to be part of the upsurge in club rugby in the North West.

Thinking back on the fixtures which I have seen, my general recollection is that very rarely, if ever, has one side completely outplayed the other, and in seeking to support this impression, I approached Sale's amateur custodian of records, Ted Atkins. Ted seems to be able to answer any questions in relation to fixtures, scores and scorers for almost the last hundred years, and consequently my question relating to matches played since 1960 were really no tax at all on his records. In fact, the biggest win since 1960 occurred in October 1960, when we won 29 points to 6 at Wilmslow, although in 1970 our win in the Cheshire Cup of 23 points to 8 was not too dissimilar. Wilmslow's biggest win was recorded in October, 1972 when we lost by 4 points to 19. Looking at the results which have been played since 1960, we do, in fact seem to have had rather the better of the encounters, having, at Sale :-

Played	W.	Dr.	L.	Pts. for	Pts. ag.
11	9	1	1	160	85

and at Wilmslow:-

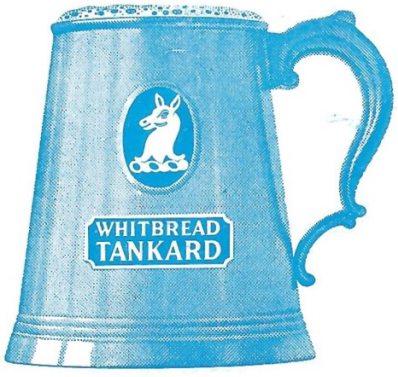
11	7	—	4	141	91

Total:-

22	16	1	5	301	176

If today's match, therefore, is an average home fixture (and really no match against Wilmslow is an average fixture) then we should win by roughly 15 points to 7. What odds ?

I was just about to say, before caution prevailed, that Sale should take the field today full of confidence after their two extremely successful matches against Northampton and Leicester. However, as has been written in these columns before, we have an unfortunate tendancy to get



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FIRST TEAM FIXTURES

Date	Club	Venue	Result
1973			
September			
1	Harrogate	Home	W 39-16
5	Old Salians (6-30 k.o.)	Home	W 52- 3
8	Manchester	Home	W 31- 3
15	Birkenhead Park	Home	W 21-13
22	Coventry	Away	16-23
29	Gosforth	Away	L 6-18
October			
6	Moseley	Home	L 0-16
10	Randwick (Australia) (7-30 k.o.)	Home	W 29-12
13	Waterloo	Home	L 12-14
17	Wilmslow	Away	W 11-6
20	West Hartlepool	Home	W 16-3
27	Manchester Univ.	Away	W 37-7
November			
3	North of Ireland	Home	W 16-10
10	Fylde	Home	D 9-9
17	Nottingham	Away	L 18-24
24	Liverpool	Away	W 25-12
December			
1	Pontyprydd	Away	L 12-25
8	Huddersfield	Home	W 18-12
15	Notts	Home	W 16- 6
22	Hinckley (KO Cup)	Home	W 37- 0
26	Kendal	Home	W 19. 0
29	Edinburgh Wand.	Home	L 12-18
1974			
January			
1	Manchester	Away	Canc'ld
5	New Brighton	Home	W 19-10
12	Bedford	Home	W 23-6
19	Moseley	Away	L 4-31
20	Old Wirralians	Away	W 23-4
26	Bristol	Home	L 3-15
February			
2	Birmingham	Home	W 9-6
9	Clifton (KO Cup)	Away	W 6-3
16	Bradford	Home	W 10-6
17	New Brighton C. Cup	Home	W 9-7
23	Fylde	Away	W 16-7
March			
2	Gosforth	Home	L 12-19
9	Rosslyn Park (N.C.C.)	Home	L 12-42
16	Northampton	Home	W 19-0
17	Winnington Park	Away	W 12-6
23	Leicester	Home	W 25-17
31	Wilmslow	Home	
April			
6	Bath	Away	
12	Roundhay	Away	
13	Wasps	Home	
15	Northern	Home	
20	Gloucester	Home	
24	Broughton Park	Away	
27	Liverpool	Home	

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9	S. SMITH	× ★	Scrun
1	A. NEWALL	×	For
2	J. LANSBURY	×	
3	D. WARD		
4	J. A. GARDINER	×	
5	R. TRICKEY	× +	
6	R. CREED	× ★	
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VIKINGS XV FIXTURES

Date	Club	Venue	Result
1973			
September			
1			
5			
8	Manchester	Away	L17-24
15	Birkenhead Park	Away	L14-29
22	Coventry	Home	L 9-22
29	De La Salle OB	Home	W16-6
October			
6	Moseley	Away	L 3-10
13	Waterloo	Away	W52-9
17			
20	Preston G'Hopps	Home	W 40-4
27	Manchester Univ.	Home	W 34-0
November			
3	Harrogate	Away	W 18-0
10	Fylde	Away	L 21-28
17	Notts	Home	W 9-4
24	Liverpool	Home	L 7-15
December			
1	Coventry Welsh	Home	Cancld,
8	Huddersfield	Away	L 12-23
15	Headingley	Home	Canc'ld
22	Broughton Park	Away	L 3 - 6
26	Old Salians	Away	W 14 - 3
29	Old Bedians	Away	L 3-12
1974			
January			
1	Manchester	Home	Canc'ld
5	New Brighton	Away	L 11-20
12	Broughton	Away	W 6-0
19	Moseley	Home	L 3-22
26	Alsager Coll.	Away	L 4-6
February			
2	Old Sandbachians	Home	W 9-6
9	Old Salians	Home	L 0-29
26	Bradford	Away	W16-10
23	Fylde	Home	W39-10
March			
2	Old Bailiens	Away	W 14-6
9	Halifax	Home	W 51-0
16	Metrovick	Away	W28-0
23	Manchester	Away	W18-0
30	Wilmslow	Home	
April			
6	De La Salle OB	Home	
12			
13	Old Sandbachians	Away	
15			
20	Orrell	Away	
24	Broughton Park	Home	
27	Liverpool	Away	

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carried away by our own euphoria, and assume that after a successful and well contrived win, the next match can be won just as convincingly, but without the required effort and pre-match meditation. We can be absolutely certain that Wilmslow will take the field today in the right frame of mind, for the simple reason that they always do, and whilst I am writing these notes, and being continually interrupted, I am asking all those who even remotely believe in silent prayer to spend a few minutes this week asking their god to ensure that our fifteen lads take the field in the right frame of mind. By the time the final whistle goes, I will know exactly how much influence my friends exert.

Last week we put on a remarkable display against Leicester on a perfect pitch and a beautiful day. Perhaps the wind had rather more influence than we may have supposed at the start, for Leicester played with it in the first half, and saw themselves 14 points ahead by half time. This was not a true measure of their good play, but an accurate reflection of our poor display. They were a big, heavy pack, certainly, and we were without Richard Trickey and Roger Creed, but for the first half I hardly think we saw the ball at all, and the game was virtually played in our 25. During this period, we did little to help ourselves, and one again noticed certain lapses in our defensive ability. However, we always felt that even though we were losing, we had very much better potential than our visitors. The second half was quite remarkable for the change in fortunes, and Sale really began to play well. The tight scrummaging improved, and long before the end of the game we had taken several balls off the head, and were pushing Leicester all over the ground. In the line out, where we had been so very badly mauled in the first half John Gardiner and Peter Laws, who probably played his best game for Sale, performed heroics, and our loose rucking improved out of all recognition. The backs began to look more dangerous, although I believe that even though they were playing much better, they could still improve on that showing.

The man of the match was undoubtedly Chris Toone at full back, who yet again amassed a vast number of points, scoring all of our points with the exception of the try scored by Wayne Isherwood, through a try, a drop goal, four penalties, and one conversion. Much has been written about Chris this season in this programme, and it is, of course, very pleasing to us all that he is continuing to live up to the reputation he has now achieved with us. If he continues, the highest honours must come his way.

It is perhaps not always a good thing to mention individual players by name, but I think the performance of two other backs deserves some comment; firstly Alan Morritt gave yet another first class display on Saturday, and is playing at the moment as well as ever. It is tremendous that Sale should have scrum halves of the calibre of Steve Smith and Alan, and everyone at Sale is delighted at the way in which Alan has accepted the berth of second scrum half, and plays so well when he is called upon. The other fellow whose play is of interest is Gordon Graham. Gordon started the season in

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tremendous form, certainly showing himself to be a player of the highest class in both attack and defence, and was really making a name for himself as a bruising centre whose physical contact invariably left his opposite number in no doubt as to who was boss. Unfortunately, injury in a county match kept Gordon out of the game for a couple of months, and I am just wondering whether or not it has had a slightly adverse affect on his confidence. Perhaps today we shall be able to see him displaying his ability rather more fully and forcefully that in the past few weeks, for without doubt, he, like Chris, can go places.

May I once again take the opportunity of welcoming all our visitors into the Clubhouse to partake of the liquid refreshments therein, be they hot sweet tea, or cold bitter.

Next Home Game

Sale

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Wasps

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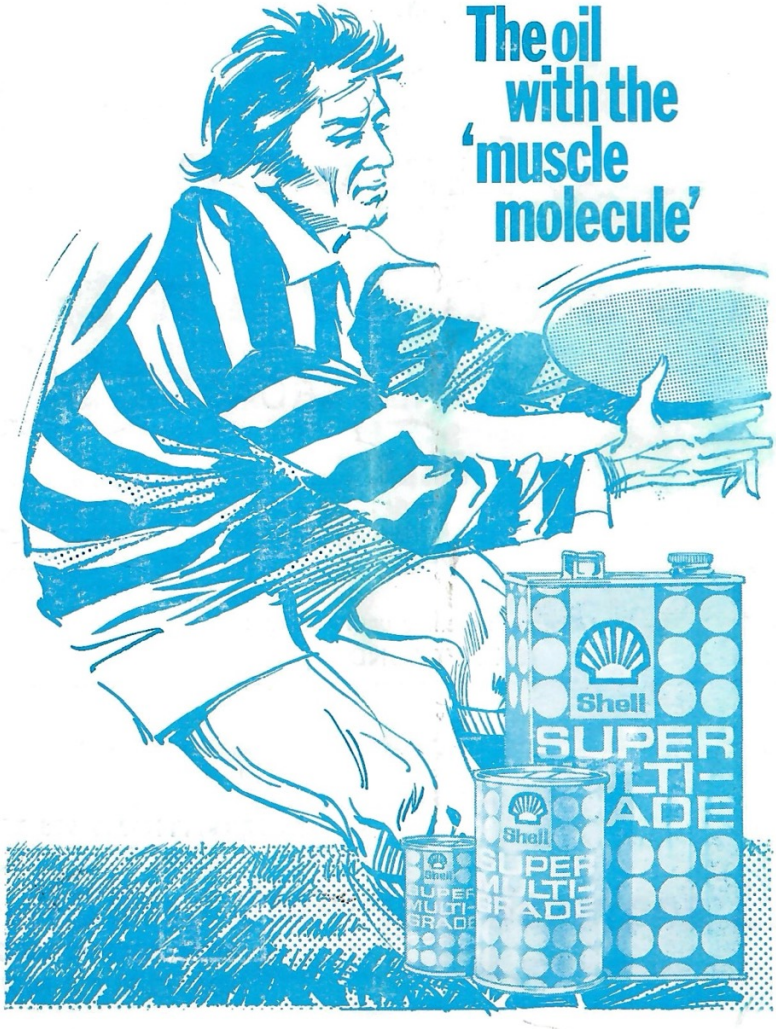

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